

Fowler House
(Bailey-Parrot Cottage)
204 Ridge Street
Charlottesville
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1072

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FOWLER HOUSE (BAILEY-PARROT COTTAGE)

HABS No. VA-1072

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

The Fowler House at 204 Ridge Street, also known historically as the Bailey-Parrott-Fowler Cottage is located at the intersection of Garrett and Ridge Streets. It was built in the Gothic Revival Style in 1862.

The two gentlemen Patrick Martin and Spottswood Keller who purchased the land upon which the house now stands were possibly interested in the land for its proximity to the Virginia Central Railroad, (now the C & O Railroad). They did not build on the 19 acre tract and suffered a financial loss when they sold the land to Charles E. Bailey for substantially less than their purchase price.

Charles E. Bailey moved more quickly, perhaps as fast as two weeks when he sold the land to Grafton Spurrier and realized a substantial profit. He might possibly have built the original T-shaped planned house in that time. Considering its rather simple wood frame construction, it is feasible.

Domestic construction realized a tremendous boom in the mid-nineteenth century with a wider variety of styles and pattern books to go by. Andrew Jackson Downing established both in American architecture with his Architecture of Country Houses in 1850, which went through nine printings and sold 16,000 copies.¹ Therein, he provided simple plans for carpenter constructed houses, and importantly he advocated the Gothic Revival style. In The Architecture of Country Houses, Downing stated,

Take for example, the vergeboard of a rural Gothic gable. As part of a well-built villa, this vergeboard is carefully carved in thick and solid plank, so as to exhibit all the details of outline and tracery boldly to the eye, and so as to endure as long as the house itself.²

It is not surprising that after William I. Parrott purchased the house from Grafton Spurrier in 1863 that it was known as the 'Parrott Cottage'. In plan, the Parrott Cottage was exactly like Downings' plans for suburban cottages as shown in Country Houses. The principal floor of a suburban cottage had an open veranda entering into a narrow hallway which contained the stairs going down. On the left side was the parlor, shown with a bay. On the right, the living room. Directly ahead, was the kitchen with larder and pantry. The location of the three fireplaces is also very similar. The original plan of the Parrott Cottage, prior to 1877, was quite similar.

This addition of a semi-octagonal bay, as well as the handsome rusticated wood siding created a workingman's mansion. The detailing on the bay of the Fowler House is particularly nice and impressively scaled, particularly in comparison to a nearly identical bay window located at 515 Ridge Street to the west. In addition, the rusticated wood siding is perhaps the only example of it in Charlottesville.

During the twentieth century, the Fowler House was increasingly in disrepair. This was the case despite its inclusion in the Ridge Street Historic District as defined by the Charlottesville Historic Landmarks Commission. It is fortunate that this rare example of the Gothic Revival has been given new vitality.

¹Alma deC. McArdle, Carpenter Gothic: 19th Century Ornamented Houses of New England. (New York: Whitney Library of Design), 1978, p. 16.

²Andrew Jackson Downing, The Architecture of Country Houses, (New York: Dover Publications), 1969, p. 42.

CHAIN OF TITLE

The following is the chain of title to the property on which the present-day Fowler House was built. The exact construction date is not ascertainable from the given deed information, but must have occurred between the second and the third entry below. Deed records are found at the Charlottesville Tax Assessors Office, as well as the Albemarle County Courthouse Clerk of Circuit Room. Deed references are listed as ACDB, Albemarle County Deek Book, then followed by the volume, number and page.

1860, November 20,

ACDB 59-222

grantor: Thomas J. Pretlow and wife Clara A.
grantee: Patrick Martin and Spottswood Keller

Sold for \$3750.00 and surveyed by I.W. Dolin to comprise "18 93/100 acres, more or less. Sold by the tract and quantity as comprehended within the metes and bounds of said survey."

1863, January 2,

ACDB 60-91-93

grantor: Patrick Martin and Spottswood Keller
grantee: Charles E. Bailey

Part of the original tract acquired by the former in 1860. The land "situated on or near the southwestern side of the corporation limits of Charlottesville", was sold to Bailey for \$600. Known as the 'ridge road' or street, and on the southern side of the Virginia Railroad. No particular quantity of land is guaranteed.

1863, January ?

ACDB 60-91-93

grantor: Charles E. Bailey
grantee: Grafton Spurrier

Land was sold soon after, possibly a matter of days -- one reference says two weeks. "One acre with all buildings" was sold for \$6000. Well and pump access was grained and would "belong jointly to the owners of the two adjacent lots".

1863, December ?

ACDB 61-70

grantor: Grafton D. Spurrier
grantee: William I. Parrott

"About one acre" was deeded to Parrott for \$9010. \$6000 of which was paid in cash. Parrott completed the unfinished payments to Bailey due by Spurrier. The house was known thereafter as the 'Parrott Cottage'.

1894, July 2,

ACDB 4-478

grantor: Heirs of W. I. Parrott, (deceased)
grantee: D.W. Fowler

D.W. Fowler acquired the land "beginning at the southwest corner of Garrett and Ridge Street, thence along the east side of Ridge Street 115.6' to G.W. Fuller's line, thence northward along Parrott Street 129.9' to Garrett Street, thence westward along Garrett Street 271' to the beginning" for \$3000 from the relatives of the deceased, they being Bertie Matthews, W.J. Tyson, N.T. Shumate, R.B. Parrott, Lizzie Shumate and Alice D. Parrott. Having surveyed the property on June 16, 1894, they, "secured to aid Fowler full and quiet possession of said premises."

1900, June 5,

ACDB 10-360

grantor: Ms. Fannie Fry
grantee: Alice J. Fowler

"Fannie Fry sold house to Alice J. Fowler for 100 dollars cash in hand and certain other valuable considerations this day...sold with covenants of special warranty...on the east side of Ridge Street and first south of the C & O Railroad track known as the 'Parrott Cottage'".

1952, February 17,

WB 7-110

grantor: Joshua Fry Fowler
grantee: Abbie Clark Fowler

"Joshua Fry Fowler bequeaths all my estate, both real and personal, to my wife Abbie Clark Fowler".

1968, October 01,

ACDB 302-342

grantor: Abbie Clark Fowler
grantee: Edmund H. Teeter

Granted a "parcel of land with improvements described as being to the northern line of the property formerly owned by George W. Fuller; thence in an easterly direction with Fuller's old line 210 feet to the western line of lot conveyed by Alice J. Fowler and husband, to H.H. Hankins by deed date February 13, 1923, (DB 42-497), thence northward with the western line of Hankins lot to the southern margin of Garrett Street; thence westerly with the southern line of Garrett Street, 211 feet to the beginning, being all the land conveyed to Alice J. Fowler by Fannie M. Fry by deed date June 5, 1900."

1981, May 6,

ACDB 419-579

grantor: Edmund H. Teeter

grantee: Wilson H. Cropp, Jr.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

General Description

The Fowler House is a single-story wood frame house built in the Gothic Revival Style. It was originally T-shaped in plan, but later additions filled in the rear corners. It has intersecting gabled roofs. It is 37'3" wide and 32'2" long, and 29' high. It is noteworthy for its rusticated wood siding and sawn barge-board on all four elevations.

In the 1870's the northeast addition was made with a nearly flat shed roof. It is likely that the rear two story open porch was added at this time. In 1923, a southeast addition with a metal shed roof was made, including a double door garage. At the same time the entrance porch was replaced with a large wrap-around veranda. Later in the twentieth century an enclosed first story porch addition was made, also with a shed roof. The original T-shape became oddly rectangular, particularly because of the semi-octagonal bay window on the northwest corner, which probably dates from the 1870's.

The building has not changed hands often; subsequent to its current owner it was only sold twice. It has undergone renovation in the last two years. The roof has been replaced, repainting and plaster work have been done, and air conditioning and new plumbing have made the structure suitable for office space. Its beautiful details and wood-work are well intact.

Exterior Description

Overall Dimensions: The house measures 37'3" along the east-west axis and 32'2" along the north-south axis. The apex of the roof measures 29'2" from ground level at the rear of the house, (east side), which is lower than the grade in the front, (west side), the latter due to infill when Ridge Street was widened.

Foundations: The foundation is brick in 5 course American bond on the nineteenth century portions and 7 course American bond on the early twentieth century additions, (1923). The west facade, at the English basement has a concrete watertable added at the time of the veranda above. The southeast addition has a concrete foundation and clapboarded siding.

Exterior Wall Sheathing: The primary wall sheathing is rusticated wood blocks which are on the average 2'7" long and 10½" wide. The joints are on the average 3/4" wide. A wooden sill 10" wide runs around the building's entire circumference. The ground floor is sheathed in brick which still shows clearly brick pencilling.

Structural System: The framing is balloon frame on the 1923 addition, the latter which prevents access to the nineteenth century portion.

Porches: A large wrap around porch embracing the western side dominates the Ridge Street facade. It has symmetrically placed Tuscan columns, plain rectangular balusters and a bevelled handrail. The columns are placed over brick piers. The English basement facade is concealed by trellis work. The porch has a tin seamed shed roof. The southern entrance has a simple two story porch without handrail or baluster on the ground floor. The upper story has an interesting handrail with sawn baluster which forms awkward pointed arches. Above on the projecting eaves it has scalloped bargeboard. The porch has tin seamed roof.

Chimney: The house has three interior brick chimneys with corbelled caps and stringcourses, one on either side of the central hall and an interior chimney in the rear. The latter has been bricked up and the surface plastered over.

Openings: Doorways and Doors - the doors in the nineteenth century portion are four panelled, with two tiers of molded panels. The north door, (front entrance), is rectangular with 3-paned sidelight and 4-paned transom. The door itself has a 3-part panel on the lower half and a large fixed pane on the upper half with a projecting sill. The door is flanked by slim engaged octagonal columns. The south door is plainly detailed in comparison with a two-

tiered panel. A five panelled Regency door gives access to the southwest addition from the front porch. It has a transom.

Windows and Shutters: Windows are primarily of one type, 6/6 double hung, and 6'6" tall and 3'6" across. In addition are 4/4 and 1/1 double hung windows. The northeast addition has double casement windows on the ground floor. The octagonal bay has four tall 1/1 double hung windows, each is 9'9" tall, including the lower panelled spandrel. The window surrounds are architrave trim on the nineteenth century portion and plain trim on the twentieth century portion.

Roof: The four-part medium-pitch intersecting gable roof is uniformly 35 degrees. It provides large gabled expanses of rusticated siding against which the bargeboard stands out. The latter has three sets of crescent-shaped curves on both sides with saw tooth cut-outs. It has a central pendant and pendant loops at the corners. The latter were partially removed on the south and north sides when the porches were added. The roof has a boxed cornice and is now asphalt-shingled but was originally variegated slate.

The octagonal bay has a small tin hipped roof with a decorated central gable, including dentils, an appliqued sunburst motif, and gabled returns. The cornice is bracketed. The southeast corner has a slightly sloping shed roof of 15 degrees has a rusticated frieze to relate it to the siding.

Interior Description

Floor Plans: The ground floor and first floor are nearly identical in plan. The ground floor has a northern entrance leading to a long narrow hallway with a single flight staircase to the left, and a door to the western room on the right. The hallway follows the length of the "T" to the south room. A left-hand door leads into the eastern room with octagonal bay room from the northern entrance.

Stairway: One flight of narrow stairs connects the ground floor to the first with eleven - $10\frac{1}{2}$ " treads and 8" risers.

Flooring: The original flooring in the nineteenth century portions is distinguished by its wider dimension, ranging from $4\frac{3}{4}$ " to $5\frac{1}{2}$ ". The newer twentieth century portions have narrow floorboards of approximately $2\frac{1}{2}$ ".

Walls and Ceilings: Nearly all are plaster on lath. The hallway has a round molded panel for the suspension of a chandelier. All rooms have a baseboard. The eastern room and hallway have been

fully panelled on the ground floor in the early twentieth century of dark wood.

Doorways and Doors: The nineteenth century doors are approximately 8' tall, heavy and two-tier molded panelling. The twentieth century doors are 5-tiered molded panel Regency doors. The door leading from the northeastern to the more eastern room has a four-paned transom as it was originally an exterior door as well.

Interior Trim: Heavily molded doorways and windows characterize the nineteenth century construction. Of note are the angled baseboards where walls meet at right angles. The twentieth century molding is simpler, and more shallow. See drawings for the specific molding configuration and location.

The fireplaces on the first floor south and west rooms have openings framed by polygonal pilasters, a plain frieze, and bevelled edge mantel. The mantel corners are squared off.

Landscape: A narrow brick path runs around the east side of the house to the gravelled parking area in the rear. Traces of a garden remain on the west side as indicated by stones placed for a border. The parking lot is bordered on the south by a steep embankment and lower down, is a large dirt parking lot.

Outbuildings: There is a small wood frame, 4-gabled out building in the rear. It has two single leaf doors in the north side. On the narrow east and west ends are two upper 4-paned windows and below a double hung window with blinds. It has clapboarded sides and boxed cornice.

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PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation was undertaken by the School of Architecture at the University of Virginia under the direction of M. Edward Lay, Professor of Architecture. The material was prepared by Susan Holbrook, Graduate Student in Architectural History during the Spring Semester 1982. It was donated to the Historic American Buildings Survey. The documentation was not produced under HABS auspices, nor edited by members of the HABS staff.